

And yet I know no poet whose poetic moments are more rammed with poetry. How much one values this sort of spasmodic writer depends on temperament—whether one is 'classical' and asks for ordered beauty of form, or 'romantic' and prefers flashes of dazzling colour. But after all, why not love both? Beddoes can only give the second kind of pleasure; but he gives it so intensely, that I feel he is undervalued still. What he needs is a good selection of short passages, often of single lines. The anthologists have merely concentrated on a few of his lyrics, which have the sort of prettiness dear to their pussy-cat mentalities; just as they persist in representing, or misrepresenting, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night* by the cockney amenities of 'Sunday up the River'⁹. As a lyric poet Beddoes can be lovely; but it is in his verse dialogue that he shows his strength, not only that power of phrase and image with which his letters vibrate, but something also that they could not reveal—his grip of that Proteus among metrical forms, so simple-seeming, so mockingly elusive in a hundred poets' hands—dramatic blank verse.

The strange thing is that his most living poetry is a pastiche of dead work. As a contemporary of Keats, writing in the manner of 1820, he is usually unreadable; it is as a contemporary of Webster, risen from the dust of

two centuries, that he quickens into a
quivering vitality.
A far more practical surgeon than Crabbe,
he had none
of Crabbe's power as a poet of treating
living subjects.
His Muse is a Witch of Endor, her magic a
necromantic
gift of waking to utterance a tongue long
buried. Yet
this becomes a little less strange when we
remember how
Chatterton too, hopeless when he writes in
the poetic
style of 1770, found himself only by
escaping back to an
England older still than Beddoes ever
revisited. Think,